from Aksum (just as Menelik I is regarded by the Coptic Abyssinians to have brought it to Aksum from Solomon's Holy of Holies at the temple in Jerusalem). But the tabot of the zars also symbolized the outdoor tree stump which serves the invisible zar spirits as a table. Thus, partaking of refreshments from the coffee trays constituted a kind of communion with the zar spirit to whom the tray was dedicated, although this was done only during intermissions of the cult services. On one tablet, the "araqi" supplied by the foreigner stood ready.

In the corners, more types of incense were burning than before. In addition to "etan" (frankincense), the domestic Ethiopian "bukbuka" was sending up clouds of perfumed smoke. Leaves of "wogart", believed pleasing to the zar that causes headaches and neuralgic pains, were occasionally placed on the clay incense burners. From time to time, some imported pebbles of yellow sulphur ("kabrē" or "din") sent up acrid smoke. But the sweet odor of most types of incense predominated most of the time.

About 8:30, the drummer brought his heavy drum down from beneath the solidly built roof, and began to drum slowly, rythmically, still subdued. The curtain was lowered, but the shadow of Lady Salamtew behind it could still be vaguely seen. Suddenly raucous grunts began to be heard from behind the curtain, emanating from Woyzäro Salämtew. This meant that her first major zar had arrived, and was beginning to descend into her, performing the magical coitus. Her joyshouts became louder, higher-pitched, turning to shrieks, quicker and quicker. She was beginning to perform the "gurri" victory dance of the zar who had conquered her.

Immediately the women devotees began to handclap rythmically, gradually quickening their tempo, in time to the twisting and turning

X 794 796 756 781 of Lady Salamtew's body. The twisting began like an embrace, with her head thrown back, rotating movements of the chest, followed by a rythmic forward bump of belly and hips. Her ecstatic shrieks varied from pain to exultation (like the "ellel" of women in the Coptic church service). Encouraging shouts came from individual women in the audience, and some raised their holiday - reddened palms in prayerful joy. As the climax approached, the jerky twisting of Lady Salamtew's body gradually changed to smoother movements of the limbs. She was now well in tune with her zar, and he was comfortable within her. The excitement in the audience changed to warm and glowing emotion at the same time. Then Lady Salamtew emitted a loud scream, and dropped in a heap. The drum stopped abruptly. There was a sudden hush in the audience. The strong sweet odor of generously burned incense pervaded the consciousness and its smoke leisurely curled upward.

X 794 756 796 It was only a matter of minutes before Lady Salamtew recovered. Her brother pulled the curtain to one side. Her eyes were bright with curiosity as she glanced about the house as if she had just arrived. She had lost her absent-minded appearance, for now the zar acted and spoke through her. Suddenly she appeared to notice the foreigner for the first time, smiled and waved a friendly greeting. Her voice was still husky, but warm, as she called out "how are you" in understandable Amharic, rather than her esoteric "zar language"; this was a courtesy, though [95] she used the female familiar gender (the zar often uses the inverted [23] genders in address). She further inquired whether the foreigner was sitting in comfort, and how his health was today (hinting at the "ailments" he had used as a pretext). Then she ordered the handmaidens to offer the foreigner talla (barley beer), and coffee, on one of the zar coffee trays.

Crowd: "Amēn".

Poet: "Raya, Raya, we are calling;
Azābo, Azābo, we are calling!"

Crowd: "May you be".

Poet: "This will bring him to me;
now it will entice him!"

Crowd: "Amēn".

Poet: "Azābo ! Raya ! I am calling!"

When he stops there is an expectant hush. A woman zar doctor seated on a mat amid the crowd begins to sway backward and forward, still in a sitting position. All eyes turn to her, for this is the beginning of the "gurri" of her zar, and the spirit is beginning to move her. She begins to rise, still swaying. Her neighbors hold her lightly for a moment and remove her long necklaces which have metal objects attached that might hurt her or someone else in the spinning movements that are to follow. Now fully on her feet, the possessed begins to twirl, emitting hoarse shrieks. She spins faster and faster, like a top. Several times she slows a little, raises her arms rythmically, and contorts head, then chest, belly and hips, while her zar descends into magic coitus with her. Each time she spins again, to the ever faster tythm of the drum and the rythmic handclapping. The other women encourage her on to the orgiastic climax with shouts of "ahun" (now) and "yehun" (let it be). Her shrieks turn to long whines. After about 15 minutes of this "gurri", she falls in a heap, suddenly, exhausted, shouting "ahun" (now) herself with her last effort, then lies silent and motionless.

The poet now lures the "pagan" zar Ganyu, whose home is in a bamboo forest in the Metemma lowland of the eastern escarpment of Ethiopia.

Poet: "Tall bamboo you (lit. he) will eat; bamboo you will devour;
Lord, named "Dämäna" (lit. cloud), from where you devour bamboo;
Ganyu, Ganyu, Ganyu, pure honey (flattering synonym for healer) I
dance eyaho, eyaho dance, Oh Ganyu!"

Thereupon one of the women devotees who has shaved a tonsure in the center of her skull ("Ganyu" comes from "ganye", meaning tonsure), which is the visible requirement he makes of those whom he "possesses", begins to rise. The "gurri" she dances differs only in details from the one performed for the Galla zar spirits.

It is now 11:00 P.M. The various male zars expected on the program for the evening have now "descended". It is time for the female zars to begin making their descent, which is safe, now that many protective male zars are about.

Word is whispered around that a male and a female zar who "will bite" are about to attack some of the possessed. Everyone rises and crowds close to the wall, leaving the hearth and the center of the room free. Only Lady Salämtew seems unafraid. She calls out a warning to the foreigner, in her husky voice but in friendly tone, advising him to stand on the bench so as not to be bitten. "Ayzäw" (be well, be of good courage, be of good cheer) she calls out to the foreigner, using the polite address, and forgetting to use the familiar 2nd person singular feminine, which is her privilege.

This time the possession begins differently. Two women detach themselves from the frightened crowd almost simultaneously. Both

X 794 796 781 ● women cower on all fours, snarl at each other, snort like angry leopards, showing their teeth. They crouch like wildcats about to spring at each other, their faces turned to the ground, and eying each other only intermittently. A shallow, large clay dish filled with barley beer is set on the floor for them, and the two antagonists compete with each other in lapping up the drink like cats.

One of the women is possessed by an evil female zar, the other by a mean male zar. The male zar snaps at the female zar, who is of equal power and status. Appearing stimulated by the drink, they chase each other about the room, still cowering, snorting, attacking, retreating, finally grasping each other in a battle clinch, and actually nipping at each other. When this happens, the Lady Salamtu rises quickly, and descends into the arena wielding a thick leather strap. The contestants roll on and off one another and begin to bite seriously, but before damage is done, Lady Sälämtu swishes her strap, pulls them apart or separates them with light blows.

This battle is accompanied with drumbeat and rythmic handclapping by the crowd. The contestants do not rejoin battle but roam very rapidly as if blind and lost, sniffing the ground as if they depended on the sense of smell, until they fall exhausted in a heap. But a few moments later they run to Lady Sälämtew, kiss her hand, and prostrate themselves before her on the dirt floor in front of the platform. Thus the female and minor zars pay homage to the powerful male zars that possess Lady Salamtew, and acknowledge that they have learned to keep within bounds and not do very severe damage.

X 794 796 262 It is now 11:30 P.M. and a brief recess is announced. A young, part-Sudanese servant woman, and ex-slave, serves coffee, barley beer,

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X 794 796 262 areqi, and also round, solid wheat discs (Qitta")- the unleavened bread of travelers, expensive when made of wheat.

X 794 ●781 [782] About midight, the convention proceeds, with the poet intoning the call for the female zar "Shanqit (see table for her characteristics):

Poet: "Dance, round and round, brave one;

Shanqit, we are calling; brave one".

Both men and women clap more fiercely than ever, in quick rythm Suddenly the servant woman who had served the latest refreshments stiffens with a jerk, screams, and lets the tray slide from her hand. She is about to be possessed by the female zar of her class and occupation. This "gurri" is infantile in character. The young woman begins to skip about the room like a young goat or an overly gay little girl. She teasingly pokes at the men, again and again, until a few copper coins are given her. When this happens, she jumps high with glee. But a moment later she is back, pouting, demanding some sweets, asking for honey. Given some, she devours it, and dances a victory dance, flipping about on tiptoe. The drumbeat quickens. Finally she falls exhausted, her zar now in full possession of her.

X 794 796 688 There is another hush, awaiting further demonstrations. But there is an unscheduled interlude which reinforces discipline. The woman who had danced the "pagan" gurri had left shortly afterward, ostensibly for a call of nature, but had not returned until now, far too long an absence without permission. Seeing her enter, Lady Salamtew rises, shouting angrily, walkes toward her and beats her on the upper back with the heavy strap, several times, rather hard. The victim stands with bowed head, not stirring under the punishment, evidently

X 774 771 The religious and ethnic syncretism of the zar cult is evident from the descriptions given above. This is not too surprising, partly because of the great age of the cult, partly because of the emphasis on "free enterprise" in the zar cult.

X 774 776 The cosmology of the zar spirits themselves indicates considerable crossing of boundary lines. Some live in regions other than their ancestral homes. Some have "married" zar spirits of other religions, or have produced "offspring" of mixed "ethnic ancestry". But despite this crossing, most zar spirits are identified with a specific religious, or ethnic, or religious affiliation.

X 774 776 781 The human patients, however, are not bound to join a zar spirit of their own affiliation. Very often they do not. This is one of the forms of "free experimentation" - though not on purpose, and unconscious in most cases. A mistreated Amhara wife often joins a predominantly Muslim zar society because "possessed by a Muslim zar"; yet continues as a Coptic Christian in ordinary life. Christian Amhara people believe that Muslim girls about the age of puberty very often become zar possessed, not infrequently by a Coptic zar. Some Coptic zars are believed to take special interest in religious festivals, and if they possess a Coptic woman they may "inspire" her to dance in public outside the church on Ṭəmqät (Epiphany).

Several of the more powerful, male, Coptic Christian zars are regarded as "educated in Jerusalem". Their demands are more subtle: e.g. in place of the unimaginative staple demand of pagan zars for a chicken sacrifice, Christian "Jerusalem-trained" zars may require the purchase of a coffee cup of a certain specified color, from which the "possessed" alone may drink.

794 776 781 177 771 Yet despite this hierarchy of spirits, in the static construct of the zar cosmology, the factor of syncretism dominates the dynamic functions. As a result, a Coptic woman possessed by a Muslim zar may wear the colorful print head shawl of the Muslim woman; and even a Falasha woman, living in a semi-isolated Falasha hamlet, may suddenly refuse to shave her head (which is required of wives by Falasha religious law) and will braid it in the fashion of a Coptic Amhara woman without serious ostracism by her kinfolk which would be her punishment otherwise. At the wadaja ceremony, like the one at the convention, Coptic women and doctors chant hymns modelled after Muslim worship, refer to the zar as "prophet", and use Arabic loanwords, to flatter and cajole a Christian zar.

794 776 771 Finally, religious syncretism in the zar cult is often intertwined with Christian cosmology and hagiology. Thus, Zar Sayd-Qadr, of Muslim origin, has become synonymous with Jesus Christ; The legendary Amhara Christian saint Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus is believed to have been an ally and advisor of the powerful Zar Säyfu Chängär. The archangels Mikael and Gabriel, who are given feasts on taskar memorials for Coptic Christian departed souls, are regarded in the zar cult as "commander of the right house" and "commander of the left house" of zars (patterned on the human, tradional Abyssinian army). The Christian zar Abba Yosef if believed to join other Copts in bathing in the river to celebrate Tenqät (Epiphany). Christian zar spirits remain dormant during the lenten season.

798 In view of this, it is perhaps not too surprising that the Coptic Church of Abyssinia remains passive, in effect tolerant by default, toward the zar cult and its social institution.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sponsored the translation of works from Arabic. Among these were *Laws of the Kings,* a collection of civil and canon laws which became the official basis for judication, and a penitential manual, *Spiritual Medicine,* the last major production in Ge'ez literature.

Yohānnes also continued Fāsil's work of "purifying" the church. He decreed that descendants of the Portuguese must leave Ethiopia unless they joined the Orthodox Church and that Muslims must reside apart, either in their own villages or in ghettos. Ordained as a priest before becoming emperor, Yohānnes followed keenly the theological disputes of his day. Toward the end of his reign he convoked a synod in Gondar to discuss the nature of the Holy Spirit in Christ, the chief theological question in Ethiopian history.

Iyāsu I, like many of Ethiopia's rulers, appears to have been moved by deep religious feeling. Describing Iyāsu's religiosity, one of the priests of Gondar wrote an eulogy a few years after his death:

> The king used to stand at the window of his palace . . . and listen from his tower on high to the singing of the priests and learned men, to their gentle hymns which moistened the bones by their exceeding tenderness. When their offerings pleased him greatly he was pierced with affection for them and drawn by the harmony of their heavenly peace. For this reason . . . he would prepare for them dinners filled with delights, and bid them eat with him in his royal chambers, ornamented all about with the beauty of pure gold and wrought silver. He would take off his gold necklace and present it to them. He adorned them with garments of purple and of staffs interwoven with gold from the treasury of his kingdom. . . . None of the kings before him had done such as he, and none of the clergy of yore had been treated as were his priests and learned men. After the dinners, the king and his priests together sang hymns of joy and jubilation all night long in the palace—in their time of pleasure, in the sweetness of divine ministry.*

Iyāsu the Great did much to establish Gondar as the most important center of religious culture in Ethiopia. To this end he brought outstanding priests and learned men from all over the country to his capital. From Gojjam, for example, he brought the great master of religious verse, Kīflē Yohānnes, whose lines are remembered even today. The number of teachers in Gondar in his time exceeded five hundred; there were one hundred and fifty at his church Dabra Berhān Selassie alone.* It was under Iyāsu I that the classic subject matter of the higher religious studies in Abyssinia—*zēmā* ("religious

* Dabra Berhān Selassie, one of the two churches built by Iyāsu I, is the only one of the original churches of Gondar which survived later conflagrations of the city. The original paintings which covered its walls have been preserved, as well as the remarkable ceiling from which rows of wide-eyed angels look down from between wooden beams. The church provides separate places for nobility and commoners, and a balcony for the emperor.